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ABSTRACT

The addition of international concepts in the business school curriculum has been a major thrust of accrediting agencies and the profession at large. While marketers working within the United States have a vast amount of knowledge of their customers, many marketers are "fooled" by the notion that consumers in other countries are the same type of consumers as the marketers since they share certain similarities (clothing, food, music). Many business people lack the knowledge of how to apply cultural concepts because of a lack of exposure to other cultures or the "blinder effect" that "everyone in the world wants to be an American." The practical application and/or the use of cultural aspects is a main emphasis of the International Markets course at Robert Morris College (even in low-level marketing courses the international focus is being implemented). The application of cultural aspects are achieved by the use of cultural games/simulations and cultural research with the implication of the culture as it relates to the marketing mix. However, the "cultural universe" at Robert Morris College between the marketing discipline and the Humanities discipline has not been clearly defined to date. (A list of international cultural mistakes, and a description of the amount of cultural borrowing that makes up American culture are included.) (RS)

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Marketing Component

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Marketing Component

I. Introduction

For the past 15 years the addition of international concepts in the Business School curriculum has been a major thrust of the accrediting agencies and the profession at large. Many books and articles have been written about major U.S. corporations and the mistakes they have made conducting international trade. Books by David D. Ricks, Jeffrey S. Arpan and Paul Simon, highlight the "Marketing Blunders of the Tongue Tied American." (Figure 1). Many corporations, large and small, as well as political figures, are still culturally ignorant. Ever since technological developments have improved communication and transportation this has given a physical sense of the world becoming closer together. The concept of cross-cultural understanding among people of the world has not kept pace with the technological stage.

As a marketer the success or failure of your company and/or your product will depend on your employees job related expertise, individual's sensitivity and their responsiveness to the new/different cultural environment. In today's world, an international experience does not have to transpire in relocating to a different country but "students/individuals" can work for a foreign owned and operated business domestically. If a student/individual has technical skills and has even been successful in applying their skills, these factors do not always translate to success in international business.

A marketer working within the U.S. has a vast amount of knowledge of their target market (customers), competition and resources to assist marketing decisions. The research on consumer buying behavior, attitudes, values and implication of the research finding on the U.S. consumer has been well documented and can be easily obtained and utilized to assist in making marketing decisions. Many U.S. marketers "are fooled" by the notion that we share certain similarities (clothing, food, music, etc) with other countries, so we are the same type of consumer. But, they can not ignore the cultures customary ways of behavior that will influence the

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consumers buying behavior. The understanding, implications and application of the cultural aspects for a U.S. marketer has been a "gray" area for many years.

II. RMC Marketing Current Integration of International Concepts

The aspect of international trade is not a new concept in the U.S. Trading dates back to Christopher Columbus. But, since the end of the Industrial Era ( ) and the beginning marketing era ( ) the emphasis has changed. The need to expand the understanding of business people/business students has become a major topic in the business professional literature as well as in marketing textbooks. Many books, articles and seminars are written/presented on the international topic. Business ventures outside the U.S. still have a high failure rate.

The application of cultural concepts are missing. The international "blunders" are not always learned from nor understood by the individual. Many business people view the ability to understand and adapt to foreign ways of thinking and acting not as important as strong technical knowledge/skills. Many business people lack the knowledge of how to apply cultural concepts because of a lack of exposure to other cultures or the old blinder effect, "Everyone in the world wants to be an American."

"All cultures - to one degree or another - display enthnocentrism. Perhaps the greatest single obstacle to understanding another culture is ethnocentrism - literally "culture centered" - which is the tendency for people to evaluate a foreigner's behavior by the standards of one's own culture and to believe that one's own culture is superior to all others. The tendency to be ethnocentric is universal." (Ferraro, 1990).

Cultures borrow from other cultures new ideas, norms and material goods. (Figure 2). The cultural diffusion concept is the spreading of cultural items from one culture to another. "Anthropologists generally agree that as much as 90 percent of all things, ideas and behavioral patterns found in any culture had their origins elsewhere." (Ferrano, 1990). Based on the cultural diffusion concept the need for marketers to be able to understand and adapt to a different culture becomes even a more important aspect to the international field.

The practical application and/or the use of cultural aspects is a main emphasis of the International Markets course (even in low level marketing courses the international focus is being implemented). The application of cultural aspects are achieved by the use of cultural games/simulations and cultural research with the implication of the culture as it relates to the marketing mix. The analysis of the similarities and differences of the U.S. culture vs the cultures currently being studied provides a real-life application to the field. The students are not learning just facts about a culture but are applying the "facts" for decision making purposes. Culture is a learned behavior and cross-cultural expertise can be accomplished with effective training programs. The cross-cultural training the students are provided in the curriculum will ultimately improve their skills in applying the learned cultural concepts to future business decisions.

III. Partnership Between Marketing and the Humanities Disciplines

Using the cultures of the world, or the Robert Morris College NEH Grant, a number of common problems exist and share common features. These differences that exist can be referred to as the cultural universe. The cultural universe at RMC between the Marketing discipline and the Humanities discipline has not been clearly defined to date.

Figure 1

International Cultural Mistakes

- General Motors used "Body by Fisher" to described their product

  Translation: "Corpse by Fisher" in Flemish

- General Motors "Nova" car

  Translation: "No Go" in Brazil

- Pepsico ad campaign "Come Alive with Pepsi"

  Translation: "Pepsi brings your ancestors back from the grave" in Chinese

- Major airline advertised in Brazil their plush "rendezvous lounges" on its jets

  Translation: In Portuguese "rendezvous" implied a room for making love

- The uses of color in ad campaign:

  Translation: Green symbolizes death and disease in Malaysia

Figure 2

The culture historian Ralph Linton reminds us of the enormous amount of cultural borrowing that has taken place in order to produce the complex culture found in the United States:

> Our solid American citizen awakens in a bed built on a pattern which originated in the Near East but which was modified in Northern Europe before it was transmitted to America. He throws back covers made from cotton, domesticated in India, or linen, domesticated in the Near East, or wool from sheep, also domesticated in the Near East, or silk, the use of which was discovered in China. All of these materials have been spun and woven by processes invented in the Near East. He slips into his moccasins, invented by the Indians of the Eastern woodlands, and goes to the bathroom, whose fixtures are a mixture of European and American inventions, both of recent date. He takes off his pajamas, a garment invented in India, and washes with soap invented by the ancient Gauls. He then shaves, a masochistic rite which seems to have been derived from either Sumer or ancient Egypt.
>
> Returning to the bedroom, he removes his clothes from a chair of southern European type and proceeds to dress. He puts on garments whose form originally derived from the skin clothing of the nomads of the Asiatic steppes, puts on shoes made from skins tanned by a process invented in ancient Egypt and cut to a pattern derived from the classical civilizations of the Mediterranean, and ties around his neck a strip of bright-colored cloth which is a vestigial survival of the shoulder shawls worn by the seventeenth-century Croatians. Before going out for breakfast he glances through the window, made of glass invented in Egypt, and if it is raining puts on overshoes made of rubber discovered by the Central American Indians and takes an umbrella, invented in southeastern Asia. Upon his head he puts a hat made of felt, a material invented in the Asiatic steppes.
>
> On his way to breakfast he stops to buy a paper, paying for it with coins, an ancient Lydian invention. At the restaurant a whole new series of borrowed elements confronts him. His plate is made of a form of pottery invented in China. His knife is of steel, an alloy first made in southern India, his fork a medieval Italian invention, and his spoon a derivative of a Roman original. He begins breakfast with an orange, from the eastern Mediterranean, a canteloupe from Persia, or perhaps a piece of African watermelon. With this he has coffee, an Abyssinian plant, with cream and sugar. Both the domestication of cows and the idea of milking them originated in the Near East, while sugar was first made in India. After his fruit and first coffee he goes on to waffles, cakes made by a Scandinavian technique from wheat domesticated in Asia Minor. Over these he pours maple syrup, invented by the Indians of the Eastern woodlands. As a side dish he may have the egg of a species of bird domesticated in Indo-China, or thin strips of the flesh of an animal domesticated in Eastern Asia which have been salted and smoked by a process developed in northern Europe.
>
> When our friend has finished eating he settles back to smoke, an American Indian habit, consuming a plant domesticated in Brazil in either a pipe, derived from the Indians of Virginia, or a cigarette, derived from Mexico. If he is hardy enough he may even attempt a cigar, transmitted to us from the Antilles by way of Spain. While smoking he reads the news of the day, imprinted in characters invented by the ancient Semites upon a material invented in China by a process invented in Germany. As he absorbs the accounts of foreign troubles he will, if he is a good conservative citizen, thank a Hebrew deity in an Indo-European language that he is 100 percent American. (1936:326–27)

Ferraro, Gary P. The Cultural Dimension of International Business. Prentice Hall,1990, Page 28-29.

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